

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. An apparatus for processing a video signal to produce normal quality video for display on a display device and so as to inhibit the making of high quality reproductions therefrom while allowing lower quality reproductions to be made, the apparatus comprising:

a first signal modification element which alters the video signal to produce a first modified video signal that is viewable as normal quality video on the display device, and wherein the first modified video signal, if reproduced, produces a video copy of unusable quality; and

a second signal modification element which alters the video signal to produce a second modified video signal of reduced quality that can be reproduced using a reproduction device.

2. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing the quality of the second video signal to a level equivalent to an analog video signal.

3. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing the quality of the second video signal to a level equivalent to a broadcast quality video signal.

4. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing the quality of the second video signal to a level equivalent to that achievable using a standard VCR tape in six-hour mode.

5. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing picture resolution by reducing the number of pixels per line.

6. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing picture resolution to about 500 pixels per line.

7. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing picture resolution to about 400 pixels per line.

8. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing picture resolution to about 200 pixels per line.
9. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by using fewer luminance components per macroblock to produce the second modified video signal.
10. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by using fewer chrominance components per macroblock to produce the second modified video signal.
11. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by using fewer data bits to encode pixel information to produce the second modified video signal.
12. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by changing the colors from that of the normal video signal to produce the second modified video signal.
13. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by adding white noise to produce the second modified video signal.
14. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by altering the sound content associated with the video signal to produce the second modified video signal.
15. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the first modified signal is output to a first output port and the second modified signal is output to a second output port.
16. An apparatus as in Claim 1 wherein the first modified signal and the second modified signal are output into a switching element enabling switching between the first modified signal and the second modified signal and supplying a selected one of the first modified signal and the second modified signal to an output port.
17. An apparatus for processing a video signal so as to inhibit the making of high quality videotape recordings therefrom while producing a normal picture on a display device, the apparatus comprising:

a video decoder for decoding a video signal to provide a clean video signal;

a first signal modification element which alters the clean video signal to produce a first modified video signal which is of unusable quality when output for reproduction thereby inhibiting the making of usable copies therefrom, and wherein the first modified video signal is viewable as high quality video when displayed on a display device; and

a second signal modification element which alters the clean video signal such that a reduced quality version of the content is produced and output for reproduction.

18. An apparatus as in Claim 17 wherein the second signal modification element includes a signal quality reducing means for altering the clean video signal to produce a signal having reduced signal quality.

19. An apparatus as in Claim 17 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing the quality of the second video signal to a level equivalent to a broadcast quality video signal.

20. An apparatus as in Claim 17 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing the quality of the second video signal to a level equivalent to that achievable using a standard VHS tape in six-hour mode.

21. An apparatus as in Claim 17 wherein the second signal modification element alters the video signal by reducing picture resolution to a level which is less than the resolution of the clean signal but greater than about 200 pixels per line.

22. A method for processing a video signal so that it produces a normal quality picture on a display device but produces a reduced quality copy when reproduced using a reproduction device, the method comprising:

providing a clean video signal;

first modifying of the clean video signal to produce a first modified signal that is of unusable quality when output for reproduction and is viewable as high quality video when output to a display device; and

second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal having reduced signal quality when output for reproduction.

23. A method as in Claim 22 wherein providing a clean video signal includes,

receiving an encoded video signal and decoding the encoded video signal to produce the clean video signal.

24. A method as in Claim 22 wherein the second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal includes degrading the clean video signal to a quality level equivalent to that recordable on a standard VHS tape in six-hour mode.

25. A method as in Claim 22 wherein the second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal includes degrading the clean video signal to a level equivalent to a broadcast quality video signal.

26. A method as in Claim 22 wherein the second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal includes degrading the clean video signal to a level equivalent to a VCR quality video signal.

27. A method as in Claim 22 wherein the second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal includes degrading the clean video signal by reducing the number of pixels per line in each picture.

28. A method as in Claim 22 wherein the second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal includes degrading the clean video signal by reducing the number of luminance components and chrominance components per macroblock.

29. A method as in Claim 22 wherein the second modifying of the clean video signal to produce a degraded second modified signal includes degrading the clean video signal by using fewer data bits to encode pixel information.